DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 326 526 SP 032 775

AUTHOR Benton, Gary J.; Richardson, Gloria
TITLE A Survey of Attitudes toward Student Teaching.
PUB DATE Nov 90
NOTE 42p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, November 13-16, 1990). Alternative title: Assessing the Attitudes of Student Teachers toward Their Student Teaching Experience.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attitude Measures; Higher Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Program Attitudes; Questionnaires; Reliability; Research Design; Socialization; *Student Teacher Attitudes; Surveys

ABSTRACT

A description is presented of the development of an attitude survey, the Mississippi Student Teacher Attitude Inventory, which was designed to establish a reliable instrument for obtaining feedback concerning student teaching. A synthesis of studies from related literature indicate that there are numerous ways to approach the assessment of student teacher attitudes and that socialization into teaching is affected by a number of variables. During the fall semester of 1989, items were selected for the instrument. The basis for the selection of the specific items was derived from the courses included in the teacher preparation program designed to meet the requirements of the Mississippi Educational Reform Act of 1982. A total of 38 items were included in the final survey. The survey was administered to 136 students at the end of their student teaching in the spring semester, 1990; an analysis of the results demonstrated the instrument's reliability. Future studies are planned to utilize it in a variety of ways. A table displays data on the frequency and percent of responses for the inventory. (JD)

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A Survey of Attitudes Toward Student Teaching

Gary J. Benton and Gloria Richardson
Mississippi State University

A paper presented at The Annual Meeting of
Mid-South Educational Research Association
New Orlean, LA
November 13-17, 1990

Running Head: S. T. ATTITUDES

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Attitude surveys have received renewed interest in recent educational situations. Because the student teaching experiences have wide-ranging and long-term impact upon the student teachers' careers, an effort to establish feedback concerning student teaching was made by designing a survey entitled Mississippi Student Teacher Attitude Inventory. This 38-item survey was then administered to 136 students at the end of their student teaching in the Spring, 1990, term at Mississippi State University. All student teachers from both Meridian and Starkville campuses were included in the sample.

The results of the survey were analyzed for internal consistency and a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .9355 and a standardized-item alpha of .9455 were obtained. This instrument demonstrated reliability and future studies are planned to utilize it in a variety of ways. This particular data will be incorporated into a longitudinal study. Further demographic comparisons are being planned.

"Assessing the Attitudes of Student Teachers Toward Their Student Teaching Experiences"

Dr. Gary Benton, Education Chairman, Mississippi State University-Meridian, and

Dr. Gloria Richardson, Adjunct Faculty, Mississippi State University-Meridian

Introduction

Assessment of student teachers' attitudes toward their student teaching experiences has become an even more important concern as a result of the recent efforts to reform educational practices. Restructuring schools, as a topic of current emphasis, also includes the restructuring of teacher education programs. Informed decision making for these restructuring efforts must be based on data which also demonstrates practical value; therefore, efforts to distinguish what happens during teachers' classroom experiences are invaluable.

Because the student teaching experiences have such a wide-ranging and long-term impact upon the student teachers' careers, an effort to establish feedback concerning student teaching was made by designing a

survey entitled Mississippi Student Teacher Attitude Inventory.

Review of the Literature

Questions concerning the real impact of the student teaching experience continue to surface and are the frequent topic of research. Much of the research literature available is ambiguous or even contradictory and the impact of student teaching appears to vary considerably for students; also, student teachers leave their student teaching with more negative attitudes toward children and teaching and with the development of more concern for survival-oriented outcomes (Ziechmer, 1980). Lortie (1975) stated that educational "professional preparation" is recent in its development and that there have been few changes of significance in the conduct of instruction. Lortie (1975) also compared the socialization process of students into the teaching profession and found them very dissimilar to those of other professions; he further indicated that mediated entry into the teaching profession is primitive, too short, frequently ineffective due to the lack of uniformity, and

comparatively casual. It was Lortie's contention that teaching is actually learned on the job and the influence of practice teaching is minimal. Lortie stated, "The student's learning about teaching, gained from a limited vantage point and relying heavily on imagination, is not like that of an apprentice and does not represent acquisition of the occupation's technical knowledge" (p. 63). Lortie's (1975) data indicated that inservice teachers found more demands on their time and energy than expected, that training was unrealistic, that work responsibilities differed, and that discipline was more difficult to achieve than anticipated; in other words, teachers' perceptions of teaching did not prepare them for the inner world of teaching. Lortie (1975) stated, "the apprenticeship-of-observation undergone by all who enter teaching begins the process of socialization in a particular way; it acquaints students with the tasks of the teacher and fosters the development of identifications with teachers. It does not, however, lay the basis for informed assessment of teaching technique or encourage the development of analytic orientations toward the

work" (67). Lortie (1975) viewed "the lack of systematic codification of practical experience" (p. 69) as contributing to the gap between instructional theory and actual classroom experiences; he further stated that beginning teachers are all too frequently uninformed "about prior solutions and alternative approaches to recurring practical problems" (p. 70). Lortie (1975) stated, "The value of practice teaching is attested to by many who have participated in it, but there is little indication that it is a powerful force away from traditionalism and individualism" (p. 71).

A contrast to Lortie's views of the socialization processes which begin with student teachers' experiences during practice teaching was found in various other research studies. Marso and Pigge (1986) examined 151 beginning students at Bowling Green State University during the spring semester of 1985 and reported less anxiety and less concern about survival following student teaching. Secondary field student teachers revealed a less positive attitude than did elementary field student teachers, but the secondary field majors were predominantly male which might have

confounded these findings. Those prospective teachers who made early decisions to become teachers, those whose need perceptions of themselves as effective, and those who were most sure of their decision to teach reported a more positive attitude. Males appeared to exhibit less anxiety before but more anxiety after practice teaching. Elementary field practice teachers reported more concern about pupil impact and less concern about teaching tasks.

In another report based on a sample of 581 students, Pigge and Marso (1986) reported findings based on three groups of students at various stages of their teacher preparation program. Changes in anxiety and confidence about teaching developed in a consistently positive direction. There was no change in attitude toward teaching. Concerns about teaching increased prior to the student teaching experience and then decreased afterwards.

Ethridge (1988) reported findings from a three-year study of 31 subjects' transition from students to teacher. She expressed the concern that induction programs serve as buffers to the real world and prevent

a realistic view of teaching. Actual teaching socialization requires the beginner to resolve discontinuities and adapt to the realities of the teaching world. In this study, the subjects were asked to:

1. compare how their teaching had changed from when they began teaching;

2. describe lessons that were successful and unsuccessful;

3. explain why they selected their particular practices, and

4. explain why they felt these practices had the results they did (Ethridge, p. 4). Data from this study revealed that school context forces adaptive changes. Teachers in this study found that work conditions and work assignments precluded the application of certain university-taught practices. Most of the respondents viewed their adaptive changes as temporary and that university learnings "were merely set aside until circumstances would allow their application" (Ethridge, p. 28). Ethridge's (1988) findings confirmed the position that practice teaching

and university-based instruction do not always provide the necessary skills to cope with the realities of school environment.

Another longitudinal study by Holmes (1990) investigated the preservice experiences of four elementary teacher education students to determining concerns and priorities. This study utilized a variety of instrumentation and included journals from the junior year field experiences and the student teaching experience. Attitudes examined in the student interviews were: (a) What are some of your personal reactions to teaching? (b) Does your attitude toward school and teaching occupy your thoughts much (Holmes, p. 22)? Cooperating teachers, and college supervisors also rated the student teachers' attitudes. The author concluded that we know too little about those we train in teacher education programs; he recommended the use of journals to provide personalized information about aspects of student teaching and student training programs.

Pinnegar and Carter (1990) presented a research study which dealt with the theories presented in

educational psychology textbooks and the purposes and needs of student teachers for conceptualized practice. These authors sought to determine whether knowledge gained through university instruction, and students' perceptions of the discontinuity of this knowledge with actual practice accounts for teachers' frustrations with their teacher education courses. Conclusions from this study were: "...there seems to be a difference between the purpose of discussions of learning in educational psychology textbooks and the purpose of practicing teachers' discussions of learning with student teachers. These differences in purpose suggest that one explanation for why students believe that university courses do not prepare them for teaching is that the textbooks do not represent information in ways that allow students to identify the concepts presented in the textbooks in the practice they encounter" (p. 26).

Bunting (1988) reported in her study of 17 student teachers that significant changes in the views of candidates occurred for ten of the subjects, but these were changes in degree rather than changes in kind;

with the most frequent change to a more moderate view. Bunting's (1988) findings conflicted with those of Hoy and Rees (1977) who showed that student teachers leave student teaching with identifiably homogenized perspectives and with Ziechner (1983) and Copeland (1980) who identified the varieties of field experiences and personal teaching identities as factors associated with the changing views of student teachers.

Hanes and others (1984) reported on the data obtained from administering a 25-item questionnaire to 123 student teachers from the secondary education program at Western Kentucky University. This study resulted from Hanes' (1984) belief that "many teacher preparation institutions fail to study adequately the quality of the program as the student teacher experiences it" (p. 1). Hanes (1984) ranked the items from the survey; receiving the highest positive rating was the statement, "I really liked the students I taught" (p. 6). The lowest item in this ranking was, "My cooperating teacher and I have similar temperaments" (p. 7). Hanes' survey indicated extremely positive attitudes towards student teaching

which could indicate that teacher preparation at the university and cooperating teachers in the schools were contributing to satisfying and rewarding student teaching experiences.

Maxie (1989) analyzed the student teaching experiences of eight elementary-level student teachers using interviews and journals to identify both self-concerns professional concerns. She found that the concerns of student teachers in her study were consistent with those found in the literature: self-adequacy and survival. She also found that subjects in her study valued the student teaching experience because it occurred in the public school setting and provided opportunity to engage in the real world of teaching. She also found that concerns change as student teachers play an active role in the socialization leading to becoming in-service teachers.

In a related study, Purcell and Sieferth (1981) examined the attitudes of 121 student teachers with a 21-item questionnaire. Variables considered in this study were: teaching methods, teacher-student relationships and lesson preparation. Analysis of

pretest-posttest scores revealed a reduction of the value students placed on preparation, suggesting an incongruity between student teachers' expectations and actual experiences. Another finding of this study indicated that student teachers' values seem to change in an unexpected way; less value was placed on traditional educational principles and practices.

A synthesis of the studies from related literature indicate that there are numerous ways to approach the assessment of student teacher attitudes. Several studies utilized questionnaires developed by the authors. Other studies employed standardized instruments. Some of the studies utilized interviews, journals, and/or self-report questionnaires. Whatever the means employed to obtain the data, some general conclusions could be drawn:

1. Socialization into teaching was affected by a number of variables, including personality, perceived or anticipated experiences, teacher preparation programs, interaction with cooperating teachers, the climate/environment of the school where practice

teaching occurs, and past experiences as a student in conservative and traditional settings.

2. Change in attitudes and concerns occurred in almost all cases; sometimes moving toward a more moderate position and usually adaptive in nature.

3. Discontinuity existed between the learning experienced in university preparation programs and actual practice in the classroom.

4. Most student teachers were concerned with self-adequacy and survival.

Consideration of this data revealed the necessity of further research into the student teaching processes employed at Mississippi State University.

Construction of Survey

During the fall semester of 1989, items were selected for the instrument. The basis for the selection of the specific items were derived from the courses included in the teacher preparation program designed to meet the requirements of the Mississippi Educational Reform Act of 1982. A total of 38 items were included in the final survey. The items were expressed as statements and responses were recorded on

a Likert (1967) five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Likewise, the items were developed according to criteria by Likert (1967): statement of each proposition in clear, concise, straight-forward statements; statements worded so that the modal reaction to some is more toward one end of the attitude continuum and to others more in the middle or toward the other end; statements so worded that about one-half of them have one end of the attitude continuum corresponding to the...upper part of the reaction alternatives and the other half have the same end corresponding to the ... lower part of the reaction alternatives (pp. 90-91).

An effort was made to eliminate statements which did not differentiate sufficiently. Items were analyzed by interested parties to determine content validity. The 38 items were deemed sufficient to obtain the desired reliability. According to Cohen (1975) a reliability coefficient of .60 would be sufficient for the instrument to be used for generalizability. (See Appendix A for Mississippi Student Teacher Attitude Inventory.)

Sample

The sample for this study included 136 student teachers from the spring semester of 1990 at Mississippi State University. The students represented both elementary and secondary preparation areas, and the largest part of the sample were elementary education majors. The sample was predominantly female. The students from Starkville campus represented 83 percent of the sample. Meridian campus furnished approximately 17 percent of the sample.

Procedure/Analysis of Data

The data were collected by the Supervisor of Student Teaching at MSU-Starkville and by the Chairman of Education at MSU-Meridian. Data were then analyzed to obtain a Cronbach Alpha coefficient using the SPSS-X package available from the Trammel Computing Center on Starkville campus. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient was .9355, and the standardized-item alpha was .9455. The instrument demonstrated sufficient reliability to use in further studies.

The frequency and percents of responses for each of the items are shown in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Examination of the data obtained for frequencies of responses and percentages of responses shows that student teachers responded favorably to almost all items. One item which showed strong disagreement was Item 15: "I feel no stress from MTAI evaluations." Despite training for these evaluations in the university's instructional program, 20.6 percent of the student teachers reported strong disagreement with the statement and 32.4 percent indicated disagreement. For Item 19: "Expectations for Writing the MTAI unit were clear," 15.4 percent expressed disagreement; 22.8 percent expressed undecided; 41 percent expressed agreement, and 11 percent expressed strongly agree. For Item 34: "When I am evaluated on the MTAI, my teaching varies from the way I teach every day," 14.7 percent expressed strongly disagree; however, 14 percent expressed strongly agree. This indicated that while some student teachers made no changes for evaluations, an almost equal percentage did. Student

teachers also indicated concern for controlling student behavior during evaluations: 29.4 strongly disagreed with the statement in Item 38: "Controlling student behavior is of little concern when I am being evaluated on MTAI." Thirty-three percent responded disagree; 9.6 percent were undecided; 17.6 percent responded agree, and 9.6 percent responded strongly agree. Other items of interest may be examined in Table 1.

With the reliability successfully established for the instrument, future studies involving use of the Mississippi Student Teacher Attitude Inventory are planned. These include further demographic comparisons; a study involving elementary and secondary student teachers; a study involving a pretest and posttest situation; and a study involving the use of journals and personal checklists or interviews at specified intervals during the student teaching experience. Further refinement of the instrument is expected despite the high internal consistency demonstrated in the initial reliability determination. The data collected for the present study will be incorporated into a longitudinal study designed to

determine if changes in the teacher-education program at Mississippi State University have a positive or negative impact on the student teacher experiences of future students.

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TABLE 1

Frequency and percent of responses for the Student Teacher Attitude Inventory.

Item	Frequency					Percent				
	1 SD	2 D	3 U	4 A	5 SA	1 SD	2 D	3 U	4 A	5 SA
1. Students are prepared to teach under supervised conditions.	4	11	16	70	34	2.9	8.1	11.8	51.5	25.2
2. College supervisors encourage student teachers to be successful.	8	12	9	53	53	5.9	8.8	6.6	39.0	39.0
3. The supervising teacher,										

student teacher and college supervisor cooperate with each other to achieve common, personal, and professional objectives.	8	17	14	57	40	5.9	12.5	10.3	41.9	29.4
4. I enjoy teaching.	7	4	10	29	86	5.1	2.9	7.4	21.3	63.2
5. Experienced faculty members accept student teachers as colleagues.	18	12	16	46	44	13.2	8.8	11.8	33.8	32.4
6. My supervising teacher makes my work easy and pleasant.	13	6	5	48	64	9.6	4.4	3.7	35.3	47.1
7. My college supervisor understands and recognizes good teaching procedures.	8	6	11	54	57	5.9	4.4	8.1	39.7	41.9

8. My student teaching responsibilities do not restrict my nonprofessional responsibilities.	17	29	14	61	14	12.5	21.3	10.3	44.9	10.3
9. I feel that I am an important part of the school in which I student teach.	3	17	18	64	34	2.2	12.5	13.2	47.1	25.0
10. I feel successful and competent as a student teacher.	5	3	8	60	60	3.7	2.2	5.9	44.1	44.1
11. Teachers in the school in in which I am student teaching appear to be well prepared for their jobs.	3	9	25	67	32	2.2	6.6	18.4	49.3	23.5

12. I feel that I am prepared to teach.	6	2	4	64	59	4.4	1.5	2.9	47.1	43.4
13. MTAI evaluations provide opportunities to demonstrate teaching competence.	9	16	2	68	18	6.6	11.8	18.4	50.0	13.2
14. Feedback from the MTAI evaluations help improve my teaching.	13	21	14	56	32	9.6	15.4	10.3	41.2	23.5
15. I feel no stress from MTAI evaluations.	28	44	12	36	16	20.6	32.4	8.8	26.5	11.8
16. I do not hesitate to discuss any school problem with my supervising teacher.	8	9	7	45	67	5.9	6.6	5.1	33.1	49.3
17. My college supervisor has a reasonable understanding										

	of the problems connected with my student teaching assignment.	11	12	18	51	44	8.1	8.8	13.2	37.5	32.4
18.	I feel prepared to meet the learning needs of individual students.	0	8	10	81	37	0.0	5.9	7.4	59.6	27.2
19.	Expectations for writing the MTAI unit were clear.	12	21	31	57	15	8.8	15.4	22.8	41.9	11.0
20.	My college supervisor and supervising teachers were supportive and helpful as I prepared for the MTAI evaluations.	4	7	17	55	53	2.9	5.1	12.5	40.4	39.0
21.	My students regard me with respect and have confidence										

in my professional ability.	7	9	13	72	35	5.1	6.6	9.6	52.9	25.7
22. I feel that my work is evaluated fairly by the MTAI.	7	18	25	64	22	5.1	13.2	18.4	47.1	16.2
23. My lessons generally achieve the required State Department of Education objectives.	5	1	7	74	49	3.7	0.7	5.1	54.4	36.0
24. Materials are available to effectively teach lessons required by the adopted curriculum.	12	12	16	69	27	8.8	8.8	11.8	50.7	19.9
25. I feel confident in my ability to provide a variety of activities at										

different learning levels.	1	6	11	71	47	0.7	4.4	8.1	52.2	34.6
26. I feel confident in my ability to organize instruction so students can learn in their strongest modality.	1	5	14	76	40	0.7	3.7	10.3	55.9	29.4
27. My students are aware of their progress.	4	5	3	73	51	2.9	3.7	2.2	53.7	37.5
28. My students have the opportunity for enrichment activities daily.	3	13	19	65	35	2.2	9.6	14.0	47.8	25.7
29. I feel competent in providing remediation to students who are having difficulty.	3	3	9	69	52	2.2	2.2	6.6	50.7	38.2

30. Adjusting instruction to meet the needs of students is a continuous process in my classroom.	4	4	8	67	53	2.9	2.9	5.9	49.3	39.0
31. I feel comfortable in my ability to give clear directions.	4	4	7	64	57	2.9	2.9	5.1	47.1	41.9
32. My questions during a lesson help students clarify lesson content.	5	3	4	66	58	3.7	2.2	2.9	48.5	42.6
33. Using more than two teaching methods during a class period is not difficult.	7	1	7	48	7	5.1	0.7	5.1	35.3	53.7
34. When I am evaluated on the MTAI my teaching varies										

	from the way I teach every day.	20	62	8	27	19	14.7	45.6	5.9	19.9	14.0
35.	I feel prepared to stimulate student interest in daily lessons.	4	2	7	80	43	2.9	1.5	5.1	58.8	31.6
36.	Students easily recognize the purpose or importance of topics.	3	14	28	70	21	2.2	10.3	20.6	51.5	15.4
37.	My knowledge of the topics covered in lessons allows effective instruction.	4	3	6	81	42	2.9	2.2	4.4	59.6	30.9
38.	Controlling student behavior is of little concern when I am being evaluated on the MTAI.	40	46	13	24	13	29.4	33.8	9.6	17.6	9.6